

P E O P L E I N T H E N E W S**JSC engineers help community business***TOP matches business problem with space technology*

A local aviation seat belt manufacturer is the latest company to take advantage of the acclaimed Technology Outreach Program sponsored by NASA and the Clear Lake Area Economic Development Foundation.

In a ceremony in August, TOP organizers unveiled their newest success story, Aircraft Belts Inc., and explained how the acclaimed program helped this small Kemah business champion a large technical hurdle.

"TOP is unique," said Jim Reinhartsen, president of CLAEDF. "We want companies, like ABI, to understand that NASA is here to help them and we have a real desire and mission to help them."

As a result of increasingly stringent FAA regulations and customer requirements, ABI was in need of updated testing and verification equipment for its aviation restraints and harnesses. Specifically, the company sought testing equipment that could help them verify the forces on different components of the belt assembly. However, there was no commercially available equipment to fit their needs. The alternative was to design test equipment themselves.

"We know seat belts," said Norman Ballard, vice president

and quality control director for ABI. "But we don't necessarily know testing equipment. We were running into dead ends trying to find solutions readily available on the market."

After one call to Cathy Kramer, TOP executive director, Ballard said he had a response in less than 24 hours. Within two weeks, Ballard had met with JSC engineers and the process began.

"By sharing our engineering test procedures, which emphasize safety, quality control and accurate measurements, we showed ABI how we do business here and how that leads to a quality product," said Rodney Rocha, manager for the JSC's Structural Test Lab in Bldg. 13.

JSC's Joe Riccio, Juan Padron and Rocha all were part of the team to help the company. They examined the ABI testing

equipment and then brought ABI on site to show them NASA's testing facilities, including equipment used for testing the lines on the X-38 parafoil.

"ABI needed a miniature version of one of the test setups we have in the JSC Structural Test Lab where components may be subjected to forces ranging from a few pounds to hundreds of

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Aircraft Belts Inc., a local company with nearly 30 employees, is the latest company to tap TOP for free technical assistance. Through the TOP partnership, three JSC engineers helped ABI develop new testing methods and hardware for its seat restraints and harnesses.

Local Embry-Riddle site announces graduates, expands program

School is out for three NASA employees who graduated from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University this month. Nina Duncan, a quality specialist, received a bachelor's degree in professional aeronautics and Mike Engle, operations data file manager, and Danny Ewing, MOD aerospace engineer, each received master's of aeronautical science degrees. The three are the first to graduate from the center, which opened during the summer of 1997.

"It is very rewarding to have our first class of graduates," said Larry Powers, who relocated from New Mexico to direct the Houston center. "Embry-Riddle always takes pride in assisting students to realize their academic goals."

The Houston center also has added a new specialization in space studies to its master's of aeronautical science program which already includes specializations in

operations, management, safety, and human factors. Other degree programs include bachelor's of science in management of technical operations, and master's of science in technical management, which is designed for entry and mid-level managers in a technical environment.

"The response to ERAU programs has been overwhelming," said Powers. "Students and employers see the results of what was taught in class in the evening being used in the workplace the next day."

The ERAU Houston Center has nearly 200 students in the program, 30 percent of which are working on graduate level coursework.

Registration for the next term is September 27. Classes begin October 18. For more information about ERAU's Houston Center, visit their Web site at <http://ec.db.erau.edu/cce/centers/houston>



JSC Photo S99-09475 by Robert Markowitz

JSC employees, from left, Mike Engle, Nina Duncan, and Danny Ewing are the first graduates of Embry-Riddle's Houston Center.

'Lost in Space' star tours JSC

JSC Photo S99-10637 by James Blair

LOCKHART VISITS JSC—Actress June Lockhart, foreground, who played the role of the mother in TV's "Lost in Space" series, and her granddaughter, Christianna Triolo, visited JSC late last month where they toured the Mission Control Center and the Sonny Carter Training Facility. Craig Schafer, background, manager, Microgravity Science, shows the visitors the International Space Station Trainers in Bldg. 9B.

Astronaut Collins receives Comets' jersey

JSC Photo S99-10968 by James Blair

AN HONORARY COMET—Leslie L. Alexander, president, Houston Comets, presents a team jersey to Col. Eileen Collins, commander of STS-93, at halftime during the team's championship playoff game September 4 at the Compaq Center.